An Essay
on

Insanity and its treatment

Respectfully submitted

To the Faculty of the

Homœopathic College

of Pennsylvania

on the

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One thousand eight hundred & fifty three

by

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It was a remark of the great John Owen, that it would really seem, as if some people wrote books, because they never read any. At the risk of exposing myself to the application of this remark, so far as it can be applied to a brief essay, I shall attempt to write on Insanity & its treatment: a subject on which I have never read any formal work & for the little knowledge of which in my possession, I am indebted to conversation, occasional Articles some personal observation, & a little reflection. It is true the remarks of Hahnemann on this subject in his Organon have fallen under my observation, & excited the same admiration of the sagacity & power of his intellect which is awakened by all from his pen it has been my privilege to read. And here it may be permitted me to remark that while this great man has been abundantly abused by his enemies & lauded by friends, few on either side have taken the

have taken the trouble to investigate & bring out to light the elements of his greatness. It was not as it seems to me that he was a very learned man, others have been more learned than he without a particle of his greatness. It was not even that he had the sagacity to discover & the boldness to hold up to view from the midst of the mass of learned lumber where it lay buried, the Law of cure, but it was, that alone, and single handed, in the midst of difficulties which would have apalled a feeble spirit, he toiled on, at first without the knowledge of others, & afterwards with a few exceptions without their sympathy & in the face of their opposition, until on the basis of the newly discovered law, he built up the Science of Homœopathy. When he had tried & rejected the structures of the past as worthless, the herculean task devolved on him of collecting new materials, reducing them to shape &

constructing them into a symmetrical building. To this task he addressed himself with an unsurpassed strength of purpose, & patience of toil, until the work was accomplished. Indeed so effectually was it accomplished; with a prescience looking forward so far, that even now, after years have passed, and hundreds of able & earnest successors have entered into his labors, it is a mooted point with many whether the science has really made progress since his day: while all are agreed that it has advanced if at all only so, as it has been in conformity with his principles, & in the mode & direction marked out by his own great example.

But to return. In the circumstances above alluded to, the intrinsic worth of what may be presented will of course be much less than if recourse had been had to the best writings of the best Authors on the subject. But then on the other hand, that which it may be presumed

is the principal object in requiring such an exercise as this, will be more effectually secured. A history of Insanity is quite beyond the scope of this Essay. Nor could the causes of insanity be fully enumerated without detailing the sins, & sorrows, the diseases and crimes of a hundred generations. So varied so vast, so countless so complicated & so long continued are the influences which have tended & still tend to unsettle human reason, that to disentangle & exhibit them would demand a knowledge & sagacity almost divine. It is sufficient for my purpose to remark that at a very early period the instances of insanity began to be observed as melancholy facts, or as indications of a peculiar sacredness required to be attached to the unfortunate subjects of this terrible affliction. It would have been well if something of this feeling had passed over to Christian nations. It would have been well, if

they had earlier been

they had earlier learned that those whom the hand of God had so touched, were the proper objects of sympathy at least if not of reverence. It would have saved them from that neglect & barbarity which has made, till within a few years the scandal & disgrace of the Christian World. In treating then the subject before us, let us in the first place enquire what insanity is. It may be defined that abnormal state of the mind which results from a disturbance of the functions of the brain, or lesions of the membranes & organ itself. The aberration may be confined to one subject, & then it is monomania; or it may extend to many subjects, or to all. So far as it does extend, it has the effect to subject the reasoning & other faculties to the control of the imagination. The perceptions & reasonings of the insane, may often be unnaturally acute, but the premises have been assumed without the exercise of judgment. As a necessary result the excited energies are all carried

forward in a wrong direction. The affections & other moral powers are either wholly perverted or turned from their accustomed channels. Strangers are often preferred to friends. Language is used & actions are performed which the individual in a sane state would have shuddered to make his own. The mind often vibrates between a state of phrensy, & a state of despair. It is at one time gay, at another gloomy. In some instances one or the other of these states predominates, & there is little variation; While in other cases a peculiar quietness & silence prevails. Where the conversation is marked by profaneness and filth, the individuals have not infrequently been distinguished in a sane state for the propriety & even piety of their conversation. Some are incessantly garrulous, others obstinately silent; some, gentle & harmless, others ill tempered, & dangerous. And though the moral sense is generally blunted by insanity, yet some are religiously disposed, & all seem benefitted

influence & services of a religious character.

The causes & occasions of insanity may be spoken of as internal & external physical & mental or a union of all. By the internal those are meant which whether belonging to the mental or bodily constitution produce derangement by disturbing the normal action of the system. By external all those influences from without whether mechanical or moral, tend to accomplish the same result. Sickness it is well known may cause affections of important organs, sufficiently grave, to issue in insanity. Metastasis of disease may produce it. External injuries particularly of the head & that too without impairing much the general health have caused insanity either persistent or intermittent. I knew a clergyman who in consequence of a violent kick on the head from a horse, was insane at intervals of greater or less length, while during the intervening periods, he was efficient & useful in his calling. The great Robert Hall so unrivalled in his powers, & in his

his powers & in his fame as a preacher, was subject to occasional attacks of insanity as the result of a severe & exceedingly painful disease. Nor is there less reason to believe that violent emotions of every day have ~~have~~ caused mental alienation in previously healthy individuals especially when suddenly excited or long continued through their overpowering effect on the nervous system. The instances of this character on record are not few; while those arising from excessive & protracted bodily & mental labor in connection with the cares anxieties perplexities & misfortunes of business & life are too numerous to have escaped the notice of any ordinary observer. Solitary confinement when protracted will often produce insanity. Disappointed love when acting on sensitive natures has sometimes proved a source of it. Perverted religious sentiment has produced the same result. Nor would it be strange if in some instances the mind awaking for the first time to a vivid perception

of its actual relations to the law & government of of God, in connection with eternal retributions while ignorant of or rejecting the remedy, should be thrown from its balance. To these may be added the many & melancholy instances of solitary or social vice, where by a secret or more open process the health is undermined the nervous system prostrated, & the mind as a last issue reduced to a pitiable wreck. I refer to those cases of insanity arising from masturbation licentiousness intemperance, & the abuse of narcotic poisons such as Opium Tobacco &c. While all are familiar with instances connected with most of the causes above mentioned above, I have known at least one instance in which the habit of tobacco chewing resulted first in aggravated indigestion then in Hypochondriasis & finally in mental alienation so entire that there were few or no lucid intervals; & the patient after being arrested in the attempt several times, at length accomplished the act of suicide. The workings of conscious

after the commission of crime have overpowered reason, & induced permanent insanity. Nor must we omit to notice those cases of hereditary derangement, where members of the same family from generation to generation are more or less afflicted. In many of these instances doubtless could the facts be ascertained, it would be found that the causes of the evil lay far back in bygone habits of vice or in poonic taint & repelled eruptions. With one other class of cases, this enumeration must close. I refer to those cases ~~where~~ having their origin in the reproductive system where in consequence of menstrual difficulties in one sex or an unnatural struggle arising from still more unnatural vows on the part of either, reason has at length been dethroned.

Let us now turn to the past treatment of this unfortunate class of persons. Till within a few years they seem to have been regarded as outcasts not only from human society but from human sympathy. Confined in dungeons

in narrow cells, in pens constructed of rough of rough planks, without light, almost without air, without fire or even clothing in some cases, without a bed but for a heap of straw, chained sometimes to the wall, without medicine or even provision for or attention to their personal necessities, & their food in some instances, cast to them as to dogs. In some instances suffering personal violence from day to day, in others wholly neglected, is it wonderful that few should have recovered: that the vast majority should have sunk from bad to worse, until they were driven out of the form of humanity, & the stamp of God's image almost wholly obliterated It may be said that I have stated extreme cases; but the investigations of Miss Dix & other Philanthropists who have explored this field, that such instances are far too numerous to be regarded as mere exceptions. In the majority of cases sufficiently violent to awaken fear on the part of others, the condition described has too

often existed as a literal fact. It is true that ignorance of the proper treatment of the malady, poverty fear weariness of thankless & apparently endless trouble, exhausted sympathy, & a feeling of resistance to what in spite of themselves is felt by attendants to be an unreasonableness which might be controlled; it is true that these & other causes have combined to make the condition of the insane more deplorable than it would otherwise have been. Thank God great reforms have now almost everywhere been introduced, & greater are in progress. Almost all the States of this Union have moved in the matter or are about to move, & many Hospitals have already been constructed with every modern improvement for their accomodation & treatment. But much remains to be done before the demands of benevolence towards this unhappy class of our fellow men will be met.

In the first place, although much of the barbarous usage to which the insane have heretofore been jected, has given place to a milder treat-

been subjected, has given place to a milder treatment; & gentle moral means are now substituted for physical restraint & corporal punishment, & although their minds are sought to be drawn off from dangerous channels by religious services social intercourse, & exercise in the open air, & converse with nature so far as they are capable of it, the care of flowers & various appropriate amusements within doors, & without, yet in their medical treatment the old ideas to a great extent still prevail. The indications suggested by the frequent violence of the symptoms are regarded as fulfilled only by a corresponding violence of treatment. Shaving of the head with blistering bleeding & the blue pill, with Calomel sweating and purging, are still resorted to as the most effective means of subduing morbid excitement, & inducing healthful action. Now all this is deplorable, & calls loudly for reform.

Where the system is not strong enough to come off victorious in the struggle, the disease which at first was amenable to treatment, becomes incurable through the weakening of the vital forces, & the unhappy victim is sent to a premature grave, or drags out a miserable existence of confirmed hopeless insanity.

In contradistinction to all this Homœopathy shews a more excellent way. In the first place it lays great stress on moral symptoms in all disease. Its Practitioners are trained to specially close observation in this direction. They are taught that moral symptoms are not only of the highest moment in themselves, in reference to treatment, but exceeding by suggestion of appropriate remedies as applicable to other symptoms in every case. So if they are true to their principles & their training, they will be prepared to detect the earliest intimations afforded by nature of approaching insanity, & thus be enabled to meet it with

appropriate remedies in the very dawn of its existence. An eye now abnormally dull then abnormally brilliant, a dilated or a contracted pupil; a momentary expression just seen & then disappearing like a meteor, & like a meteor portending often the coming storm an eye now for a moment wandering uncertainly, now intensely concentrated on a given object; at one time fixed on vacancy then turned inward in mental abstraction; a slight capriciousness of manner & conduct, a change scarcely perceptible at first in the usual attitudes motions & gait hardly noticed by friends or if observed forgotten, to be recalled when perhaps too late with bitter but unavailing regret; these & many other symptoms which might be enumerated are among the things which will give timely warning to the intelligent Homœopathic family Physician, & enable him by an appropriate prescription to nip the fatal plant

in its bud; & this too, without the slightest intimation to others of his fears. Thus he may enjoy through life the delightful consciousness of having by the blessing of God, arrested an evil fraught with inutterable distress to a whole family circle, without having awakened the anxieties or wounded the feelings of a single individual of the number. For what well informed Homœopathist can doubt that the incipient stages of insanity in all ordinary cases where there is no very serious structural or organic lesion are as amenable to treatment, as the incipient stages of any other disorder? The resources of Homœopathy are even now great in this regard & continually increasing. She has stood up in her arsenal weapons of might made ready to meet this enemy of human happiness & life as well as others less terrific & formidable. She only asks of her sons, that undisturbed by ridicule, un

undismayed by threats, & not deceived by artifice, they will diligently prepare themselves for the conflict & then calmly march out to meet the foe; the thousand ills that flesh is heir to. Success, better than a thousand of wordy arguments, will reward their efforts, & vindicate the truth & justice of their cause.

But now let me briefly advert to the course to be pursued in order to the successful treatment of the insane. In the first place the patients are to be removed so far as it can be done, from all the circumstances & influences which have been found to aggravate their symptoms, & placed in a situation most favorable to quiet of mind & body, & thus best adapted to the action of appropriate remedies. In the next place, the utmost care & caution should be exercised in the selection of attendants. Such only should be chosen as are calm, courageous kind firm & judicious It would be better

I had almost said that the insane should be without attendants, than annoyed by such as are unfitted for their station. The superintending Physician should not only be intelligent & well informed, but ~~always~~ prompt & self possessed; that whatever sagacity he has, may always be on the alert. For the morbidly exalted faculties of the insane are quick to perceive & take advantage of any failure in these respects on the part of those whose duty it is to control & guide them. The importance & indeed necessity of kind judicious management on his part need not be enlarged on. In his demeanor towards them he should be cheerful easy open without departing from becoming dignity, & treat them so far as it can be done, as if they were in possession of their reason. Above all, no attempt should be made to influence them by false representations, though many things may rightly be kept from them

which it is better for them not to know. Here is a field for the exercise of a sound discretion. As to the rooms they occupy, any appearance of restraint, & means adopted for security, should if possible be kept out of view, & moral control substituted as it may be safely in the majority of instances, for physical restraint. Their food should be simple, but nourishing, & of a good quality; because in their excited state of mind & body, there is of necessity a greater expenditure than ordinary of the materials of life.

And now finally as to the medicines to be exhibited. It is evident at a glance from all which has been said, that nothing more than an indication of the classes of remedies, adapted to the symptoms of insanity, with perhaps a few special applications can be attempted here. The degrees & phases of insanity are so numerous, & so varied by the character & circumstances of individuals, & by the bodily state, idiosincrasies, temperament

habits & occupations and diseases hereditary & acquired constitutional & medicinal belonging to the patients that every case is a seperate study; & can only then be properly treated when its whole history so far as it can be learned, circumstances & symptoms are ascertained. It may be observed however in general on this point that a violent access of phrenzy, & its opposite state of extreme depression must be met by those remedies which are known to act more immediately on the brain & nervous system in general. Distinguished among these are Aconite Belladon Cicuta Conium Coffea Digitalis Hyocyamus Ignatia Opium Stramonium Veratrum It is difficult to give a rule applicable to all cases in the administration of these remedies; because where the primary symptoms are not so well adapted the secondary will cover the case. But in general it may be remarked that Aconite Coffea & Opium are better adapted to the state of excitement. Conium Digitalis Ignatia to that of depression. In order to a permanent cure it is necessary to enquire into the

the history of the case, the organs & functions that may be implicated beside the brain; past medical treatment, temperament, character occupation, & circumstances of the patient, his past history, & that of his family & connections so far as it may with propriety be ascertained & in one word whatever may have a bearing on his present condition. All these must be carefully and patiently examined in connection with his more immediate & obvious symptoms, that from the whole a judgment may be formed, & the proper remedies exhibited. Among these may be named as of the first importance in their application to the various maladies connected with & aggravating Insanity, as well as on account of their greater or less adaptation to the malady itself, Agaricus Alumina Antimonium Agaricus Crudum Arsenicum Aurum Bryonia, Camphora Cannabis, Cafearea Canthares Cantharides, Cinchona, Chamomilla, Carbo Vegetabilis, Carbo Animalis, Causticum, Colchicum, Colocynth, Cuprum, Dulcamara, Ferrum Graphites Hepar Sulp, Ipecac, Lycopodium, Lachesis, Mercurius Mer Sol, Mer Cor, Muriatic Acid Natrum Muriaticum, Nux Vomica,

Phosphorus, Phos. Acid, Platina, Pulsatilla, Rhus Tox;
Scale Cop. Tum
Sepia, Silicea Spongia Staphysagria Sulphur & Acet Stannum
Tabacum, Tart Emet, Thuja, Zincum. Of these as
applicable particularly to the head in addition to the
Medicines first named, may be mentioned Agaricus,
Camphora
Aurum, China, Pulsatilla, Nux Vom. Platina. A Tinc
Thine is in almost all cases of insanity more or
less derangement of the stomach & bowels. The med
icines which I hardly need name adapted to this
condition must of course be exhibited, pro re nata.
With regard to the state of the surface, it is only
necessary to say that the appropriate means & Med
icines for procuring & maintaining a determina
tion in that direction, must not be neglected; in
order that the internal organs may be relieved, &
kept free from undue pressure. Personal cleanli
ness, gentle friction, together with regular & mod
erate exercise, will do more than anything else
to secure this object, & an important one it is too.
The way will thus be prepared for the persistent
exhibition of those medicines which are designed

to reach the more deeply seated causes of the malady so far as they exist in the corporeal system; particularly any congenital or acquired taint, any psoric or other poison, any repelled eruption, which may lie at the foundation of the whole fearful result before us. Not a remedy has been named which in the course of treatment of the various forms of insanity, would not find its place here. But this Treatise is already much longer than was intended & I will only refer to a few of the most important Among these, may be mentioned Aciduum Pic Antimonium Crudum Arsenicum, Aurum, Cinchona, Carbo veg & An, Causticum, Cuprum, Graphites, Hepar Sulp, Lycopodium, Lachesis, Mercurius Mer Sol & Cor, Natrum Mur, Phosphorus, Rhus Tox, Silicia Spongia Sepia & Thuja. It is worthy of remark that a large proportion of the medicines which have been named, while they commence their work deep in the organism, terminate it at the surface, & thus tend to accomplish the important object of restoring the functions of the skin to their normal condition, & thus produce that harmony which is heal